

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
/064 W

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R 111515Z AUG 78
FM AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7576
INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE CAPE TOWN 1397

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, SF
SUBJECT: THE PROGRESSIVE FEDERAL PARTY CAPE CONGRESS

1. THE PFP CAPE CONGRESS WAS HELD LAST WEEKEND, AUGUST 4-6, IN GRAHAMSTOWN. IT WAS EXPECTED TO BE A RATHER LIVELY AFFAIR, LIKE NATAL CONGRESS IN JUNE WHICH WAS CHARACTERIZED BY PARTY SPLIT OVER A RESOLUTION (ULTIMATELY DEFEATED) CALLING FOR "ONE MAN, ONE VOTE". GRAHAMSTOWN MEETING, HOWEVER, PROVED TO BE SOMETHING OF A NON-EVENT, AS LEADERSHIP SKILLFULLY STEERED CONGRESS AWAY FROM CONTROVERSIAL FRANCHISE QUESTION.

2. LEADERSHIP ARGUED THAT CONGRESS SHOULD HOLD OFF RESOLUTIONS ON MATTER UNTIL SUBMISSION OF A REPORT BEING PREPARED BY SPECIAL FRANCHISE STUDY COMMITTEE, HEADED BY MP VAN ZYL SLABBERT. SLABBERT COMMITTEE REPORT IS TO BE SUBMITTED TO PARTY'S EXECUTIVE IN TIME FOR PFP NATIONAL CONGRESS IN DURBAN IN NOVEMBER.

3. DESPITE ADROIT PARLIAMENTARY MANEUVERING, SEVERAL SPEAKERS TOOK FLOOR TO CRITICIZE PFP FAILURE TO SUPPORT ONE
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MAN, ONE VOTE POLICY. DELEGATE MICHAEL MITCHLEY OF EAST LONDON, FOR EXAMPLE, WARNED THAT FAILURE TO ADOPT ONE MAN, ONE VOTE WOULD COST PARTY ITS CREDIBILITY WITH BLACKS IF IT CALLS A NATIONAL CONVENTION. ANOTHER DELEGATE COMPLAINED THAT THE PARTY'S EXISTING FRANCHISE POLICY, BASED ON EDUCATION, WOULD DEPRIVE ROUGHLY HALF OF BLACKS, WHO ARE ILLITERATE, OF THE VOTE.

4. SUMMING UP THE CONGRESS, OPPOSITION LEADER COLIN EGLIN PROMISED THAT PFP WOULD HAVE A 'CRYSTAL-CLEAR' POLICY AND IMAGE BY THE NEXT PARLIAMENTARY SESSION, I.E., AFTER DURBAN NATIONAL CONGRESS.

5. COMMENT: THERE IS DEFINITELY A POTENTIALLY DAMAGING DIFFERENCE OF OPINION ON ONE MAN, ONE VOTE ISSUE IN PFP, BUT THOSE IN FAVOR WOULD APPEAR TO BE IN A MINORITY. LEADERSHIP SEEMS TO FAVOR SOME SORT OF LIMITED FRANCHISE, WITH CHECKS AND BALANCES WITHIN A FEDERAL SYSTEM.

6. PARTY EXECUTIVE IS DESIROUS OF AVOIDING FURTHER CONTROVERSY ON FRANCHISE ISSUE UNTIL END OF YEAR, AND IT IS LIKELY THAT THE ISSUE WILL ALSO BE DOWNPLAYED AT FREE STATE AND TRANSVAL CONGRESS IN AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER. LEADERSHIP CLEARLY IS CAUGHT IN A CLEFT STICK, AFRAID OF ALIENATING WHITE VOTERS WITH EMOTIVE PHRASE "ONE MAN, ONE VOTE" ON THE ONE HAND, AND BEING WRITTEN OFF BY BLACKS AS IRRELEVANT ON THE OTHER. TRICK DUMPED IN VAN ZYL STABBERT COMMITTEE LAP IS TO FIND SOME SORT OF WORKABLY COMPROMISE FORMULA. FOR THE MOMENT, PFP CAN ONLY SAY THAT IT HAS DECIDED NOT TO DECIDE, BUT ITS POLICY IS TO HAVE A POLICY.
AHLGREN

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